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REPORT

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES • FALL 1984

Cockfight Raided!

Injured, dying birds lay outside while families inside laughed and cheered as roosters fought to the death. It was the scene found by our investigator, Bernie Weller, and the Texas Rangers in a recent cockfight raid near Sullivan City, Texas. Nearly three hundred people attending the illegal event were arrested and charges were filed against participants seen violating state laws. The raid culminated an HSUS investigation launched after the Society was tipped that a big cockfight would be held.

Unfortunately, cockfighting occurs every weekend in many parts of our Gulf States region. Our recent investigations have revealed the so-called sport is spreading at an alarming rate.

People involved in cockfighting defend it

as a traditional, wholesome sport. In reality, it is a brutal, bloody contest, often ending in painful death, that appeals to the most despicable instincts in mankind.

Director Bill Meade has stated that his regional office will give priority to working for legislation in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma that would outlaw these spectacles. Meade said, "This cruelty reaches far beyond the roosters that are ripped apart and killed. The children and young people involved are learning a philosophy which implies that the destruction of animals is justified if it entertains humans."

It will be no easy task to outlaw cockfighting. The cockfighters will spring to the defense of their cherished sport. They will call it a tradition. They will say it is a harmless activity. They will even claim the roosters like to fight. Victory, therefore, will not come easily. It will require all the help and support we can get. And that means you!

If you want to help stop this cruelty, call our office immediately at (512) 854-3142 for guidance. We will tell you what it takes to achieve anti-cockfighting legislation in your state.

INSIDE

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HSUS Opposes Amarillo Pigeon Shoot

Pigeons, with broken or clipped wings, are released in front of a group of "brave gentlemen hunters." Guns blast away, and the mutilated bodies of hundreds of pigeons flutter to the ground. This is typical of a pigeon-shoot event.

In Amarillo, Texas, St. Anthony's Hospital decided this would be an excellent fund-raising event. Tickets would be sold for hundreds of dollars each and everyone — except the pigeons — would have great fun.

The HSUS, alerted by Amarillo citizens, learned of the plan and wrote Father Joseph Tash, coordinator of the event. We asked him to consider that killing for entertainment is *not* an appropriate fund-raising activity for a respected hospital. We suggested that many other activities could be substituted for the pigeon shoot.

Dr. Amy Freeman Lee, one of Texas' most respected humane leaders, wrote a powerful letter to Father Tash opposing the shoot. She said, in part, "It is a specific responsibility of clergy to encourage human beings to cease to rape and ravish His garden and, instead, to nourish and cherish it. Every aspect of the universe is God's creation, and what we do to the least of His creatures, we do unto Him. We have the inescapable responsibility to practice reverence for life — *all* life."

The Animal Rights Association of Amarillo took a public stand against the shoot and distributed thousands of flyers opposing it.

Sadly, the pigeon shoot went ahead as planned. Dr. Amy Freeman Lee and The HSUS have now taken additional steps to get the hospital's commitment not to repeat the event. There is a good possibility the cruel event will not be held again.



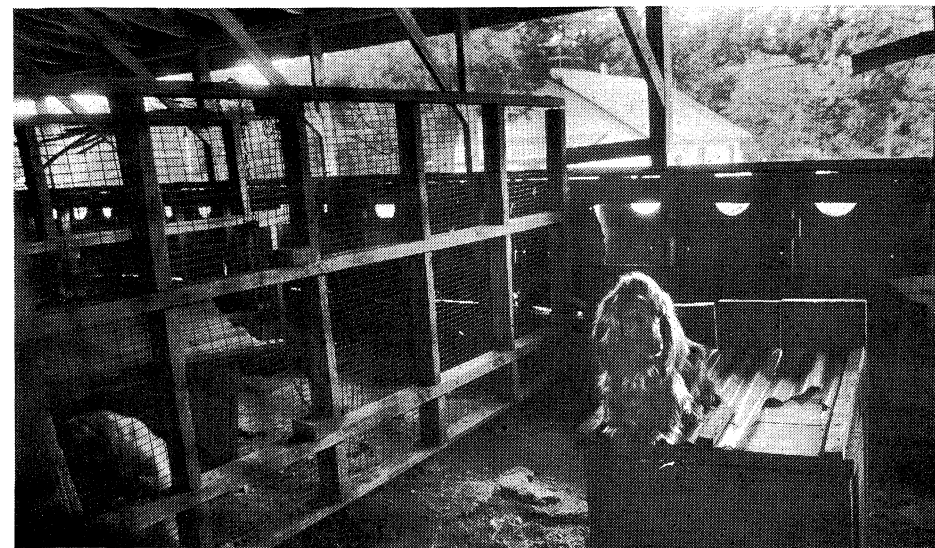
The contesting birds have long blades, called "spurs," strapped to their legs in a cockfight. As they strike each other, the spurs rip flesh and arteries, causing massive bleeding and eventual death.

— Armando Ibanez/Caller-Times

Arkansas Puppy Mill Clean-Up

Arkansas is one of seven central states that HSUS investigators feel has the greatest number of "puppy mills." These operations are mass dog-breeding kennels that sell puppies wholesale to the pet industry. Often bad conditions include overcrowding, filth, and lack of proper veterinary care. Often, puppy mill owners lack concern for their animals because they are in business strictly to make money.

A recent newspaper exposé by Patrick Kelly of the *Arkansas Democrat* prompted the



This puppy mill in Arkansas was discovered by a newspaper reporting team. Animals inside the converted chicken coop were not allowed out of their dirty wire cages. Some animals were crippled and the building was dark and smelly. The HSUS and Arkansas societies support legislation with standards to prevent such cruel exploitation.

Director's Comment



"You outsiders just don't understand that people here are different." It is truly remarkable how many times I have heard this statement made to justify animal cruelty.

This attitude wrongly implies activities causing pain to an animal in one community would be painless when performed else-

where. The basic precept of the humane movement is that needless suffering is wrong. Therefore, the infliction of such suffering must be considered wrong—regardless of where it occurs.

Classical examples of this paradox are rodeo, sport hunting, and animal entertainment events such as armadillo races. Often these activities are done as fundraisers for worthwhile charities, which makes opposing them even harder. We are told that, because the activities are traditional and "people here are different," the exploitation of animals should be allowed.

My belief is that people are not really so different. What is different in these communities, however, is their lack of exposure to, and understanding of, the humane ethic. Most cruelty is tolerated because the eyes of citizens have not been opened to what is really happening. This is the job of humane societies: to speak out against *all* cruelty and to educate their communities about animal mistreatment. Sometimes, taking a stand against animal events may cause controversy, but so be it. If we don't take a stand, who will?

Attempt to Abolish Animal Holding Period Defeated

If Oklahoma universities and researchers had gotten their way, stray animals held in shelters could be sold for biomedical experiments without a state-required holding period to allow owners time to look for their pets.

Sadly, Oklahoma is one of only six states that, by existing law, requires animal shelters to turn lost and homeless animals over to laboratories and schools. The law mandates that the animal be held at the shelter for fifteen days before release for experiments. New legislation, proposed by Representative Widener and Senator Shedrick, would have taken away this protection from the animals by eliminating the holding period.

The HSUS Gulf States Office launched a massive letter-writing campaign encouraging humanitarians to write their Oklahoma state representatives to oppose the bill. Many responded to The HSUS's effort and the bill was soundly defeated.

Pound seizure is a bad practice because it destroys the public's faith in their local animal shelter. Next year, The HSUS hopes to unite Oklahoma humane societies in support of a bill to totally end pound seizure in the state.

Louisiana Enacts Felony Dogfight Legislation

Dogfighters will face fines up to \$3,000 and imprisonment up to three years under new dogfighting penalties established by law in July 1984.

Dogfighting is a deeply-rooted, illegal activity in Louisiana and humane groups have had to fight hard for the new law. Without these stiff penalties, dogfighters could just have continued to operate, paying the small fine as a cost of operation.

The HSUS Gulf States Office contacted every state representative who was hearing the bill and urged his/her support. An Action Alert was also sent to HSUS Louisiana members asking them to write the Governor for his support.

The task ahead now is for humane groups in the state to work for strong enforcement of the new law. This can be done by publicity and follow-up of all tips about dogfighting activity. With a concerted effort, this cruel "sport" can be substantially reduced, or even stopped totally.

An Update

Texas Horse Tragedy

In the aftermath of Texas' most massive horse starvation case, The HSUS is continuing to work for a solution that will prevent any recurrence of such a tragedy.

Readers will recall that, during early 1984, thousands of horses in Falls County, Texas, died while in the hands of owners who said they could not afford the necessary feed, water, and medical care. The horses were being held for slaughter when severe winter freezes destroyed much of the grazing land, creating a serious feed shortage.

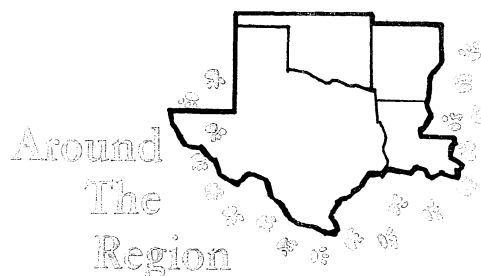


Large herds of horses suffered improper care and lack of feed during early 1984. They were being held for slaughter by ranchers involved in a "fast-buck" scheme. HSUS urged prosecution of all negligent owners, but the grand jury concluded no criminal intent could be established.

The HSUS was the first humane society to urge the Texas governor and his attorney general to intervene with a thorough investigation, adequate assistance, and enforcement of the state anti-cruelty laws. Our own investigators spent days on the scene surveying the herds of horses and urging local and state authorities to take legal action against the principals in the case. It was about this time that donations of food began to arrive and feeding of the animals got underway.

The big problem faced by HSUS investigators was the failure of local authorities to act. Authorities claimed there was no irrefutable proof to show a judge which horse owners had deliberately failed to provide food for their animals. Appeals to state officials were blocked equally firmly. Attempts by HSUS to get persons who had witnessed acts of neglect to sign complaints got nowhere. Finally, when a grand jury held a hearing and considered the evidence presented to show cruelty and neglect, the verdict was that "animal suffering had occurred, but criminal intent could not be established." This grand jury conclusion effectively ended any hope of successful prosecution.

The herds of horses have been sold off since that time. It is essential now, however, that everything be done that can be done to prevent this kind of tragedy happening again. HSUS Gulf States Regional Director Bill Meade has proposed to Texas humane groups that all work for an emergency response plan by state agencies to handle major livestock catastrophes. He has been in touch with Governor White's office to set up a meeting to discuss legislation, regulations, or whatever measures are necessary to prevent future horrors of the Falls County kind. It is expected that this meeting, which will probably include most interested humane groups and individuals in Texas, will be scheduled within the next sixty days.



NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA—The Louisiana SPCA is holding free puppy training classes and canine behavior workshops for all SPCA members and pet adopters. These classes help owners avoid behavioral problems and learn obedience training.

CONROE, TEXAS—A full week of half-hour TV shows were recently broadcast on a local program called "Hometown Happenings" for the Montgomery County Humane Society. The shows promoted the society and featured individual board members.

TULSA, OKLAHOMA—Adopt-A-Pet obtained introduction of a state bill to strengthen penalties for pet abandonment. The bill, sponsored by Representative Bill Clark, was widely supported and became law.

GALVESTON, TEXAS—The Animal Shelter & Adoption Center of Galveston Island helped with traffic control for the annual Galveston Running Club Marathon. The race had 300 registered runners and proceeds of \$2,000 were donated to animal welfare.

HOUSTON, TEXAS—Animal Cruelty Enforcement (A.C.E.) reports that they have investigated 2,129 complaints in the last year. Fourteen convictions were obtained, one of them a 30-day sentence for conspiracy to fight dogs. A.C.E. is a cooperative effort among Houston animal-welfare agencies.

Animals Gain From Louisiana Workshop

Animal-welfare leaders and individual humanitarians came away from the recent HSUS workshop in Baton Rouge with renewed determination and dedication. One of the most inspirational in recent years, the workshop provided attendees with facts and ideas to help animals. Nearly one hundred individuals from seven states attended what has become an annual event held at different locations throughout the region.

Since the workshop, a number of societies have reported they returned home and began to make changes benefiting animals. The Pulaski County Humane Society in Arkansas started using sodium pentobarbital, the most humane method of euthanasia. The Mississippi Animal Rescue League in Jackson succeeded in getting pound seizure banned there. Other societies wrote to tell us how they improved their adoption procedures, education programs, and fund-raising projects.

Next Spring's workshop will be in Wichita Falls, Texas, on March 15 & 16, 1985. Mark your calendar now and be there!

HSUS Seeks Changes at Snake Farm

Snake farms are one example of the worst type of animal exhibit—the roadside menagerie. They attract people by exhibiting animals as if they were a freak show. Compared to true zoological parks, the atmosphere is low-grade and carnival-like, and the animals are often caged in crowded, substandard quarters.

HSUS Field Investigator Bernie Weller discovered one of these operations in La Place, Louisiana. This snake farm had provoked so many citizens to file complaints that we determined an HSUS inspection was warranted.

Weller found a monkey housed in a dark, stinking cage. He saw a pig confined in an area littered with cement blocks and metal pipes. Much of the available water was dirty and stagnant. Weller's frank assessment was, "This place has some of the worst conditions I've seen anywhere."

Following the investigation, we contacted the United States Department of Agriculture, which licenses the facility. We were shocked to learn that USDA felt the snake farm met required minimum standards for those species of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act. Part of the problem is that farm animals and reptiles are not covered under this federal law.

The HSUS has requested USDA to take a closer look at this snake farm, keeping in mind the conditions we reported. USDA has responded positively and has asked our investigator to accompany them on a future inspection. We will continue to work for improvements at this roadside zoo.



At a "snake farm" in La Place, Louisiana, this pit is filled to overflowing with alligators. The water appeared dirty and stagnant; no flow of fresh water could be detected. Unfortunately, reptiles are not covered under the federal Animal Welfare Act.

— Bernie Weller/HSUS

Reflect for a moment...

how can I help animals even when I no longer share their world...?

By your bequest for animal protection to The Humane Society of the United States.

Your Will can provide for animals after you're gone.

Naming The HSUS demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the Society for this task. We will be happy to send information about our animal programs and material which will assist in planning a will.

Please send: Will information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Mail in confidence to: Murdaugh S. Madden, Vice President/General Counsel, The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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The Humane Society of the United States
Gulf States Regional Office
5333 Everhart Road 209A
Corpus Christi, Texas 78411
(512) 854-3142
William R. Meade, III, Director

The Gulf States Regional Office serves the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. The office operates Monday through Friday and is closed on federal holidays.

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The Humane Society of the United States

Gulf States Regional Office
5333 Everhart Road
Bldg. A, Suite 209
Corpus Christi, TX 78411



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